

**CITY OF CHULA VISTA**  
**STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS**  
**MAYOR CHERYL COX**  
**MARCH 16, 2010**

---

Thank you, Father Dolan, for your thoughtful and encouraging words. Dimiana, thank you for leading the Pledge of Allegiance. Christiana, thank you for your beautiful performance of our National Anthem. Deputy Mayor Rudy Ramirez, thank you for your kind introduction. I value our years of service together on this Council. And welcome residents and friends with us here tonight and watching at home.

Next year, Chula Vista will celebrate its Centennial. In 1911, no task forces, no focus groups, and probably not much of a planning study were needed to charter a city of just 550 people. 99 years ago, agriculture, established by acres of lemon trees, drew the first city lines. Even back then, people saw potential in this growing and changing area. Residents relied on a very personal interaction to build commerce and improve their way of life.

Today, Chula Vista is one of the largest cities in the country. As our city grows and changes, through the good times and the bad, it is *still* our daily personal interactions that move us forward. While we must not lose sight of today's economic conditions, our city is positioned to recapture a path of progress worthy of our history. Chula Vista will rebound, and will be better than ever.

Right now, we are recovering from some of the most economically painful years we've known, having lost over eight-and-a-half million jobs nationally, and approximately 74,000 here in San Diego County. Unemployment rates stubbornly hover near 10 percent, a rate not experienced in several generations.

Although economists tell us the worst of the recession is behind us, the forecast is for a modest recovery over the next few years.

Certainly, what we do today will make a difference tomorrow.

When I was elected mayor almost four years ago, my priority was to implement strategies for city-wide fiscal responsibility, stop draining city reserves and start rebuilding them. This was before the economic crisis crippled us all, but my commitment to our financial health remains my focus and top priority.

We are now looking forward to a more stable economic future. However, we must continue the fiscal discipline I began in early 2007 to get our city back on track.

The bottom line: We need to control government spending and we must not spend more than have. As your mayor, I will continue to insist on financial accountability.

Last year, the Council and I approved the City Manager's Fiscal Health Plan. This Plan was built on tough decisions initiated three years ago. We imposed hiring freezes, consolidated departments city-wide, made furloughs mandatory, and restructured contracts with outside agencies. A systematic review of each department and the implementation of cost-saving measures trimmed operating expenses. We asked employees to make sacrifices, and they did, by giving up or delaying pay raises. Reductions in personnel and services saved over 35 million dollars over the past two years alone.

Thank you, City Manager Jim Sandoval and your management team, for your leadership.

Chula Vista is now ready with structural budget reform measures to protect future reserves, track potential deficits and better manage the city in the years ahead. We have maintained our reserves throughout the economic crisis, and we must rebuild them to provide for economic contingencies, following established guidelines to safeguard our community from the unexpected.

Our city's streamlined organization is manageable and accountable. We strive to meet the community's needs responsibly. Big challenges and plenty of hard work remain, but our city is positioned for economic development and getting more people back to work, right here in town.

Financially, about half the city's budget depends upon a mix of property and sales taxes. Our city grows stronger, and remains strong, when Chula Vista residents and businesses do business with one another and purchase goods in our neighborhood stores. Our city partner, the Chula Vista Chamber of Commerce, actively promotes Shop, Dine, Invest and Stay in Chula Vista – because spending locally has a positive impact for all of us.

But, there is no replacement for smart budget decisions. These must remain constant, especially in these times of volatile housing markets, high unemployment and unpredictable consumer actions. Make no mistake; we've turned the corner and we're back on track.

However, the State still presents a financial threat through recent moves to raid cities to balance its own budget. California Legislators are trying to shift four million dollars away from Chula Vista right now, and threaten to seize another four million by July.

Cities across the state, no matter how fiscally conservative they might be, remain subject to being robbed in order to bail out a State legislature that either cannot, or will not balance its own budget. These state actions would result in diminished services at the local level.

We cannot risk additional losses to our municipal services, and for that reason, local governments cannot sit idly by while the state takes funds from taxpayers who believe their money should be used locally. That is why I stand united with other California mayors to say "NO" to these state cuts.

Now, enough of the bad stuff. Let's talk about the good things we've accomplished in Chula Vista.

The Bayfront Master Plan, urban redevelopment, the newly rebranded *Millenia* project (formerly known as the Eastern Urban Center), the University Villages, and the University Park and Research Center are key to Chula Vista's future.

Let me clarify. I am not suggesting we build our way out of an economic crisis. Each of these projects is vital to our long-term financial and social well-being. They address higher education

needs, increase tax revenue and tourism dollars; provide safe and environmentally sustainable housing; and yes, they will attract business and create local jobs.

Our bayfront has great potential as a place to live, work and play. Three significant successes recently took place:

- First, SDG&E opened the bayfront skyline by removing massive electrical towers and undergrounding transmission lines. Assistant City Manager Scott Tulloch's experience and leadership on this project was invaluable.
- Second, Chula Vista, the San Diego Unified Port District, and Pacifica Companies agreed last month to a land exchange of property near the Chula Vista Nature Center, for property closer to the marina. The exchange keeps development away from the Sweetwater Marsh National Wildlife Refuge.
- Third, the Port District and our City Council approved an agreement that facilitates the construction of condominiums near the marina, while assuring Goodrich Aerostructures, a long-time community asset, can continue operating.

While our successes during the planning phases are not always visible, residents will see, by the end of this year, real improvements, such as construction to open H Street all the way to our beautiful bay.

The Port District is scheduled to approve the Bayfront Master Plan in May. It will then move to the State Lands Commission and Coastal Commission for final approval.

Achieving our potential on the Bay will be a positive example of redevelopment, but let's face it, some believe *redevelopment* is a negative word. In our city's recent history, however, redevelopment created the Main Street auto park, converted a hazardous materials landfill to productive uses, attracted Cricket Wireless Amphitheater and Knott's Soak City, and joined the two sides of the Chula Vista Shopping Center together. Redevelopment dollars helped purchase land for Harborside Park, helped construct the South Chula Vista Library, and the Otay Recreation Center.

Western Chula Vista showcases our city's notable historic homes; however, this area also represents the greatest need for infrastructure improvements. By expanding redevelopment resources into residential neighborhoods, we can increase street lighting and improve sidewalks and roads -- investing resources that ultimately improve our residents' quality of life.

I appreciate Councilmember Mitch Thompson's expertise and perspective on residential housing issues.

This month, the McMillin Companies rebranded the Eastern Urban Center as *Millenia*. As home to approximately 7,000 residents, its 3,000 units will include affordable housing for seniors; office, retail and civic services; an entertainment district; parks, town squares, trails; and bus rapid transit stations as part of the landscape.

Millenia will be an example of LEED green building standards, including green features such as filtering runoff water through surrounding landscapes to reduce the volume that flows into storm drains, and pedestrian-friendly design with transit service and mixed housing/office developments to reduce traffic. The City Council and I are unanimously committed to ensuring that future development meets these high standards of environmental efficiency.

The City is currently processing developer applications for the University Villages, which will include 13,000 residential units spread over five villages in the Otay Ranch. Future residents will choose from a variety of housing types and commercial and office space, so that they can work close to home. Representing the extent of the city's eastern-most development boundary, as well as supporting the University Park and Research Center, the University Villages will host community parks, recreational facilities, public transit and the completion of the City's eastern network of streets.

Chula Vista needs a more diversified economy. And we need local jobs.

Residents should not have to travel north for good jobs or a high quality education. The University Park and Research Center will be a critical component of Chula Vista's economic development. It will attract employers, generate thousands of new commercial construction and

higher education jobs, and contribute to significant increases in business and employment across nearly every sector of the economy. Having a four-year university positively impacts its surrounding community, promoting the flow of new ideas, new technology and new leaders. As we become more engrained in a "knowledge economy," we will need a highly educated workforce.

In 2009, much awaited progress began on land discussions as property owners formally opened negotiations with the city to acquire 330 acres for higher education and job generation uses. In another step forward, the City Council approved the collection of empirical data to help recruit and plan for the university once negotiations conclude next year.

As we plan for a new university, I will continue to encourage business, research and training programs to come together to implement career-training options for high school students. We should create career pathways, sometimes referred to as service-learning, to give students choices for what might lie ahead after high school. Several local schools are demonstrating leadership in this area now.

I am a member of an Education Roundtable with other California mayors who support career training. Next month we will deliver our message to state leaders in Sacramento, asking them to help us engage the business, research and the educational communities to create partnerships for high quality education.

My career as a teacher and principal convinced me that education is the best anti-gang, anti-violence, anti-poverty tool we have as a society.

Last year, I described how budget cuts would likely affect the city's departments and services, most notably in reduced staff. While the loss of trained people is never easy, our city has benefited from the hard work of dedicated volunteers who help our staff keep the city running. Their efforts span every department: administrative assistance, memberships in boards and commissions, public safety, recreation, the Nature Center, and the Animal Care Facility. Hundreds of volunteers provided nearly 2 million dollars in service to Chula Vista in 2009.

Please join me in thanking our volunteers.

We must continue to promote this spirit of service as we have in the past through Beautify Chula Vista, when people from all over town gather to clean up one area of the city. Service goes beyond city government, throughout all our non-profits and community organizations. Over the next year, I will join my fellow mayors to help generate more resources to advance volunteerism and service-learning opportunities.

Our employees are our greatest asset. They are continually tasked with more and they consistently rise to the occasion. This past year, each city department met their cost-cutting goals and while maintaining high levels of service. I am proud of our staff.

The Finance and Human Resources departments respectively instituted conservative budget practices and clearer personnel rules, creating a stronger city structure, now, and for the future. Restructuring, however, has not diminished our focus on public safety. Chula Vista is a safe place to live. Crime is down by 28 percent since 2005.

Last year, the Chula Vista Police Department was awarded a multi-agency grant to address potential cross-border crime in the region. The department also won a prestigious award for excellence in problem-oriented policing through the Chula Vista Motel Project. This reduced crime in city motels by nearly 70 percent.

Geographic policing is Police Chief David Bejarano's strategy to make our city even safer. Dividing the city geographically north and south of L Street, Telegraph Canyon Road and Otay Lakes Road encourages officers to become experts in their designated communities and familiar faces in their neighborhoods, and to track trends, foster community confidence and use field knowledge to target potential issues.

At the Fire Department, grant funding helped improve the Emergency Operations Center last year. Although we hope that this center will never be needed, we know it's there to help us better address disaster preparedness needs. Fire Chief Dave Hanneman will bring both the Emergency Operations and Recovery Plans to the City Council this year.

Chula Vista has become the regional training site for search and rescue. Next month, a new arson dog will join the Fire Department's existing rescue dog. This new recruit will make arson investigation faster and more efficient than detector equipment and will strengthen the department's exceptional track record of arson convictions.

This year, through a partnership with the San Diego County Medical Society, more defibrillators will be placed in patrol cars and in public places.

As we work to keep our city safe, Chula Vista also continues its regional and national leadership in environmental sustainability. In 2009, we were the first city in San Diego County to receive the "Climate Action Leader" award. Greenhouse gas emissions from city operations were reduced to levels 40 percent lower than they were in 1990.

Conservation and Environmental Services staff applied for and received grants of millions of dollars. These funds will be invested in infrastructure, homes and local businesses to create local jobs that lower energy and water consumption, install renewable energy systems, promote alternative-fuel vehicle use, design pedestrian-friendly communities, and prepare transit-oriented land plans.

Travel is a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions. Our staff has worked since 1993 to design communities that reduce vehicle miles traveled. Chula Vista competed to be part of a 21-mile Bus Rapid Transit system that will connect the Otay Mesa Port of Entry to downtown San Diego through the eastern part of Chula Vista. Known as SANDAG, the San Diego Association of Governments is responsible for linking land-use to transportation systems and overseeing that spending. Both the city and SANDAG are committed to addressing residents' concerns as we work to establish a transit system that will lessen greenhouse gas emissions and the number of cars on the road.

Community design also offers a great opportunity for reducing emission. City planning focuses on consolidating development through urban density rather than urban sprawl, and establishing walkable distances from homes to schools, parks and shops. Adding to energy savings, new



homes built in Chula Vista this year will use approximately half the energy per square foot and far less water than those built in 1990.

Work is ongoing to remove energy infrastructure from our Bayfront that prevents public access and generates pollution. I want to acknowledge Councilmember Castaneda's support in this area. Last December, two turbines of the South Bay Power Plant were taken off line, reducing its emissions capacity by approximately 55 percent. We will continue to work with the Port and regulatory agencies to finally tear down this outdated plant and regain our beautiful bayfront.

Public works employees, like other employees, are doing their best with less. The department cleans parks and keeps athletic fields playable, patches potholes, repairs sidewalks, trims trees, keeps wastewater and drainage systems flowing and works to remove graffiti quickly after it is reported.

To better address what has long been a region-wide issue, Chula Vista is exploring the use of Graffiti Tracker – a powerful database designed to analyze and identify acts of graffiti. I support using this technology. It will be an effective tool to investigate, catch, and prosecute those who deface our community.

Engineers continue to deal with traffic congestion and to pursue grants to deliver the Capital Improvement Program that funds repairs to aging roads, drainage culverts, and other public facilities.

Our city won a record number of Federal and State Grants last year, including millions of economic stimulus dollars for infrastructure projects. For example, we are greening our community with energy efficient lighting, air conditioning retrofits, and solar energy systems that save taxpayer dollars and reduce our carbon footprint.

The Chula Vista Animal Care Facility had a number of successes over the past year. It gave me personal satisfaction to introduce the Pima Medical Institute to the Animal Care Facility. Pima is a national veterinary training school with a campus here in Chula Vista. Pima, our Public Works

staff, and several generous volunteers helped complete a classroom and animal exercise space -- an example of a public/private partnership that works.

The joint project offers South Bay students career training to become veterinary assistants and technicians. The Animal Care Facility is now equipped with a state-of-the-art surgical center and radiology unit. Together, students and volunteers help socialize animals who await adoption. More improvements are still needed and I will continue to work on those this year.

Last month, the city's management of the Chula Vista Nature Center transitioned smoothly to the Chula Vista Nature Center Foundation. The city still owns the facility but operation by the new non-profit greatly reduces the general fund obligation.

The Nature Center was supported by over 430,000 dollars in grants and donations throughout the year. With your help and with at least one visit a year, the Foundation can look forward to the Center thriving as an educational, environmental and tourist attraction.

I am grateful to Councilmember Pamela Bensoussan for her work as a member of last year's Nature Center Task Force.

As with the Nature Center, partnerships, grants and fundraising allow for recreation programs like "learn-to-swim" for elementary students and "Fun to be Fit," free exercise-related programming at all city recreation centers.

The Recreation Department prioritized its programs that brought in revenue when determining what had to be cut. Overall attendance topped 1.4 million visitors in 2009.

Through the efforts of Deputy Mayor Rudy Ramirez, we will enjoy the Third Annual International Friendship Games, a celebration of bi-national communities, on Saturday, May 15, at Mater Dei High School. The games will unite over 1,000 youth athletes from Chula Vista and Baja California in friendly competition.

Saturday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, marks the Second Annual Community 5K Fun Run, benefiting Parks & Recreation, libraries, the Animal Care Facility and the Nature Center. I hope you'll come out to walk, jog, or stroll through the scenic grounds of the Olympic Training Center.

Chula Vista's Public Libraries loaned more than one million books in 2009. Looking forward, the library hopes to obtain a bookmobile or storefront to extend library services. A renewed partnership with volunteers from Laubach Literacy Council will begin training tutors next month to help others learn to read.

As we plan for our Centennial celebration in 2011, a look back in history reminds us of what our predecessors accomplished for our community and country.

August 14, 1945, marked the end of World War II, and the beginning of understanding the contributions of the Greatest Generation. This date will be commemorated nationwide as the Spirit of '45. It will give us a chance to show how proud we are of our country, and our servicemen and women.

Chula Vista has been invited to celebrate the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary:

- In advance of Memorial Day, I encourage you join us on May 28<sup>th</sup> in Veterans Park to honor those who lost their lives in World War II.
- On August 14th, middle and high school students across the United States will relate stories of those who served their country in World War II. These stories will link youth with older residents, inspiring others to remember the Greatest Generation.

My hope is that as a city we can draw inspiration from the spirit of unity exemplified during that period in our history, and establish our reputation as a city that is constructive and one that comes together to move forward.

When you entered the Council Chambers this evening, you saw images of people, places and events in Chula Vista. These photos remind us of all the good that is in our city. Who could forget the Bonita Valley Girls Softball championships, or Park View Little League winning the

World Series.

What a great city we live in!

There is no doubt we have more hard work ahead of us. Together, our city employees, residents, businesses and non-profits can responsibly make lasting improvements today for the benefit of future generations.

I look forward to working with you to make Chula Vista prosper once again.

I know, together, we can make it happen.

Our city employees, the City Council, and I thank you for being here this evening.